

Conservation & Development Project Milestones and Funding Opportunities

[October 2008—Present]

Grants Summary

Grants Submitted:	<u>14</u>
Grants Pending:	<u>4</u>
Grants Awarded:	<u>6</u>
Total Funding:	<u>\$304,571</u>

Amount Pending: \$554,000

The Conservation and Development Office has successfully completed a number of benchmark projects that will help make the Town of Amherst more competitive when applying for funding opportunities, especially State and Federal grant programs. These grants and projects are undertaken in addition to the statutory responsibilities related to zoning, planning, conservation, wetland administration, and inspections and providing staff support to numerous boards and committees. To complete these projects involves collaboration between departments, countless hours of staff support, and often citizen input through committee meetings or public forums.

Completed Projects

- ***Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)***—Amherst's OSRP, developed with community input and a working partnership with LSSE and Conservation & Development, received an excellent review from the Commonwealth for being 'particularly thorough.' Approved by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services, the OSRP enables the Town of Amherst to apply for potential funding totaling millions of dollars through the Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Program and the Parkland Acquisition and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program.
- ***Kendrick Park Committee Report to the Town Manager***—The culmination of a rigorous 15-month effort that resulted in recommendations for Kendrick Park in the form of a final report. Four subcommittees studied and researched major elements of the park including history and aesthetics, natural and landscape, public markets, and recreation. Completion of this report will support the redesign and redevelopment of Kendrick Park, and prepare the Town to apply for various grant programs.
- ***Commonwealth Capital***—In recent years the Town of Amherst has successfully completed the Commonwealth Capital Program, which was established to promote more sustainable land use choices in Massachusetts by endorsing, through technical assistance and/or funding, planning and zoning measures and municipal policies & actions that are consistent with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles. The Town's score of 110 in FY2010 ranks 3rd overall throughout the Commonwealth, and as a criterion weighed heavily for state funding, positions the Town to receive substantial financial distributions from a range of grant programs.

Ongoing Projects

- ***Pomeroy Village Streetscape Design***—A multi-year project to develop street, intersection, and streetscape design for Pomeroy Village. This project included the Town successfully petitioning the Commonwealth for ownership of Rte. 116 (South Pleasant Street and West Street). That was followed by coordinated analysis and design work by the Conservation & Development and Public Works Departments, the Town Engineer, and the Design Review Board, which had been enlisted by the previous Town Manager to oversee the public design process for this project.
- ***Save Our Stop (SOS) Task Force***—An initiative conducted by an appointed task force and administrative staff in response to a proposal in the New England regional rail plan to remove the Amtrak line from Amherst. This project includes significant involvement by the Planning Director and support staff in working with other municipalities, rail industry representatives, state officials and others in the development of an alternative rail plan for western Massachusetts and central Connecticut that would retain and improve rail service for Amherst and the region.
- ***Recreational Fields Inventory and Assessment***—A multi-department effort between Conservation, LSSE and DPW to determine the recreational needs of the community and assess the condition of existing facilities in order to apply for future funding opportunities to help maintain and expand the Town's current amenities.
- ***Puffer's Pond Management Plan***—Puffer's Pond and its surrounding conservation area is a beloved resource in Town, and the Puffer's Pond 2020 Committee is researching ways to ensure that the pond and conservation areas can be enjoyed for years to come. Their recommendations will be submitted to the Conservation Commission as a final report that will help formulate a Puffer's Pond management plan. The completion of these reports will aid Amherst in seeking grants to maintain this exceptional resource.
 - **Greenway Planning Studio**—The Conservation and Development Office is partnering with the Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Department to study and assess the Mill River-Puffer's Pond Greenway as part of a larger alternative transportation network. The students will look at land use patterns, conflicting uses, ecology, erosion, and make recommendations to the PP 2020 group in March 2010.
 - **Depth and Sedimentation Study**—The Conservation and Development Office is working with two classes, one from the Geosciences Department at UMass and one from the Geology Department from Amherst College, to study the depth of Puffer's Pond. The study will use ground penetrating radar (GPR) to create a full survey of the pond. The survey will result in three products: 1) a bathymetric (depth and contours) map of the pond, 2) complete sediment profile, 3) data on the sediment quality. All of this data will be provided to us in electronic form to be used by PP 2020 and in future efforts to dredge the pond.
 - **Micro-hydro Power Generation**—Current efforts are exploring the feasibility of developing micro-hydro power at Puffer's Pond.

- ***UMass—North Amherst Bike Connector***—A collaborative discussion with the University of Massachusetts, private landowners, and Town staff to reinvigorate a project that was envisioned in the 1990's. The bike connector would increase the amount of off-road bike paths in Amherst by linking the campus with the North Amherst Village Center. In doing so, this path would also connect state designated bikes routes coming from the North along Route 63 and the Norwottuck Rail Trail to the south in central Amherst.
- ***Nielsen Project: Sugarbush Meadows***—Conservation and Development staff are working with the Town Manager to explore possible protection of ground water supplies with Sunderland and Hadley.
- ***CPAC Projects: Conservation and Historic Resources***—Conservation staff are in the process of completing a Station Road land grant project, and working with the Conservation Commission to bring forward longstanding or new projects for FY11. Planning Staff have finalized management of the \$145,000 West Cemetery headstone restoration project. Restoration of 269 headstones was completed and inspected by the Historical Commission in October. Landscape treatments in the oldest sections of the cemetery were conducted in the spring and again in October. Responses to a September request for consultant cost estimates for the Civil War tablets cleaning and conservation have been received and consultant selection is pending. That work will be followed by a request for design and engineering services for siting, display, and installations of the Civil War tablets in Town Hall. An RFP for the nomination of new or expanded National Historic Register districts has been completed and will be sent out in November. Designs for historic signs for two NHR districts, West Cemetery, and an historic Writer's Walk, and an accompanying RFP for fabrication and installation of those signs, are being finalized with the Historical Commission and will likely go out in December. Work on other historic projects and development of CPA projects for FY11 continues.
- ***Hitchcock Center for the Environment: Green Building Project***—Staff from the Conservation and Development are assisting the Board of Directors and Building Committee of the Center in their efforts to build a state-of-the-art sustainable building at Larch Hill. The Hitchcock Center proposes to build a state-of-the-art LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) environmental learning center at its current location at the Larch Hill Conservation Area. The building will be a highly visible model of ecological design in a projected 6,500 square foot facility that meets advanced criteria for energy and materials efficiency, use of recycled materials, biological wastewater treatment systems, solar and renewable energy, and ecological landscaping. The design will render a superior earth-friendly facility that is less expensive to run, has interiors and exteriors that are easy to maintain, is longer lasting than traditional buildings, and will serve as a model for future building projects in the community and region.
- ***North Amherst Professional Research Park (PRP) Pre-Development***—Amherst has been working with private landowners, specifically at the Patterson site, to help facilitate economic development in North Amherst. This project is a collaborative effort between

Departments that may take years to fully realize. Staff are currently conducting preliminary site analyses and assessment, and are researching possible grant funding for pre-development work relative to wetlands, infrastructure improvements and site design. Planning is also underway with regard to potential interactions between future development of the research park and North Amherst village center.

- ***Other Economic Development Activity***—Ongoing coordinated planning and preliminary site analyses continues with regard to identifying potential priority sites for brownfields recovery grant projects and town and village redevelopment.

The following is a list of funding opportunities and grant programs pursued by the Conservation and Development Office. Each item is separated into three bullets: the first bullet provides a brief description of the grant program, the second bullet describes the Town's request, and the third lists the project award or funding request.

Grants Awarded

- ***Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grant—U.S. Department of Energy***
 - The Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grant program is funded through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) to help municipalities reduce overall energy use by funding infrastructure projects.
 - Amherst has been allocated \$162,000 to help reduce total energy use and improve energy efficiency in existing structures. The funding will support the replacement of pump motors of the heating systems at the elementary schools, replacement of the pump motors at two waste water pumping stations, and replacement of the boiler and heating system at an elementary school.
 - ***Awarded \$162,000***
- ***Urban Forestry Challenge Grant—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation***
 - The DCR Urban and Community Forestry Program offers 50-50 matching grants to municipalities and non-profit groups in Massachusetts for the purpose of building local capacity for excellent urban and community forestry at the local and regional level.
 - \$15,000 grant request (\$30,000 total project cost) for 1-year project to conduct a street tree inventory in the village centers, along scenic routes, and heavily traveled roads. The grant will fund a professional consultant to perform the inventory, prepare material for synchronization with Amherst's WebGIS, and train staff and volunteers and to continue updating the inventory.
 - ***Awarded \$15,000***
- ***Conservation Partnership Grant—Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services***

- The Conservation Partnership grants provide funding to assist non-public, not-for-profit corporations in acquiring interests in lands suitable for conservation or recreation purposes.
 - The Planning and Conservation Department partnered with the Kestrel Trust to research and write the Partnership Grant, which helped purchase a Conservation Restriction (CR) on a 14-acre agricultural property in South Amherst.
 - ***Awarded \$75,000 to match \$75,000 in CPA funds.***
- ***Financial Support of the Energy Task Force Coordinator Position—Amherst College and Hampshire College***
- Hampshire College and Amherst College have annually awarded the Town of Amherst \$2,500 and \$3,000 respectively, to support the position of the Energy Task Force Coordinator since 2002. The position was developed to oversee the Town's participation in the Cities for Climate Protection Program's five milestone process to reduce carbon dioxide emissions; sponsored by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability.
 - ***Annual Award: \$2,500***
- ***Clean Energy Choice Program—Massachusetts Technology Collaborative***
- The Town of Amherst participated in the Clean Energy Choice Program sponsored by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. As a result of citizen donations toward the creation of renewable energy technologies, the Town was awarded matching funds. As a town whose donations exceed 3% of the residential population, additional matching funds were awarded through the state sponsored program. Monies awarded were to be used toward renewable technologies, or support of their development and procurement.
 - One of the products of the grant was the completion of the 2008 Green House Gas Inventory update as required by the Town's Climate Action Plan reporting protocol.
 - ***Awarded: \$38,071***
- ***Anonymous Gift—Management of Conservation Lands***
- The Town received a \$12,000 anonymous gift to help with maintenance of trails including bridges, erosion control, and signs.
 - ***Gift: \$12,000***

Grants Submitted

Under Review/Pending

- ***Recreational Trails Grants Program—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation***
- The Recreational Trails Program provides grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000 on a reimbursement basis for a variety of trail protection, construction, and stewardship projects throughout Massachusetts. It is part of the national Recreational Trails Program, which is funded through the Federal Highway

Administration (FHWA). Funds are disbursed to each state to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses.

- **\$39,000** request to complete trail projects in two focus areas: Puffer's Pond—Mill River Recreation Corridor and the Norwottuck Rail Trail.
- ***Submitted October 1, 2009***

➤ ***River Restoration and Revitalization Priority Projects—Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration; Department of Fish and Game***

- Amherst submitted an application in partnership with the property owner and on behalf of the Pelham Conservation Commission to seek priority status for the Pelham Fish Rod Co. Dam located on the Amethyst Brook in Pelham. The Town intends to work cooperatively with the State and other organizations to eventually remove the dam and years of sedimentation, opening up miles of stream for migratory and non-migratory fish. Achieving priority status makes the project eligible and competitive for state and federal funding.
- **\$50,000 request in addition to technical assistance and priority status** request to assess removal of the Pelham Fish Rod co. dam.
- ***Submitted September 14, 2009***

➤ ***Drinking Water Supply Protection Grant—Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection***

- This program awards grants to municipalities and public water systems to purchase land near water sources and establish conservation restrictions to protect drinking water supplies.
- **\$85,000** request to help purchase the 65-acre Adriance property in the Pelham Watershed Lands. The property is critical to protecting Amherst's water supply and preserving the quality of the Town's drinking water. Town Meeting recently approved the expenditure of \$170,000 to acquire the property.
- ***Submitted September 11, 2009***

➤ ***Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services***

1. Local Acquisition for Natural Diversity Land Grant (formerly Self-Help)

- The LAND Program provides funds to municipal conservation commissions for the purchase of conservation land. Projects which fall under lands mapped in the Statewide Land Conservation Plan, and those that augment or connect to existing conservation lands, and thereby help to preserve the integrity and health of the local or regional ecosystems, will receive greater consideration for funding. The recent Cushman Brook Corridor (East Leverett Road) purchase was accomplished using these funds.
- **\$380,000** request to acquire the 25.61-acre Olendzki property in South Amherst.
- ***Submitted July 15, 2009***

2. Parkland Acquisition and Renovation for Communities (PARC) Grant Program

(formerly Urban Self-Help)

- The PARC Program assists communities with the acquisition of parkland, as well as construction of new parks and renovation of existing parks. Projects that serve to stabilize neighborhoods or are part of urban center revitalization efforts will be given special consideration as will those that provide for park equity in a community.
- **\$181,000** request to acquire the two Hills lots. In FY11, this grant program could be used to support construction of a new Kendrick Park.
- ***Submitted July 15, 2009—WITHDREW APPLICATION OCTOBER 2009***

Not Awarded

- ***604(b) Water Quality Management Planning Grant Program—Massachusetts D.E.P.***
 - The 604(b) grant program funds projects that assess point and nonpoint sources of pollution in a watershed that lead to the: 1) determination of the nature, extent and causes of water quality problems, 2) assessment of impacts and determination of effluent limitations necessary to meet water quality standards, 3) Green infrastructure projects that manage wet weather to maintain or restore natural hydrology; and 4) development of implementation plans that will address water quality impairments.
 - **\$48,500** funding request to perform water quality assessment and infrastructure mapping of the Tan Brook Watershed in partnership with the University of Massachusetts. The project includes watershed assessment, water quality analysis, and development of an implementation plan that identifies necessary actions to improve water quality of the Tan Brook before it enters the Mill River.
 - ***Rationale of Funding Agency—Due to limited financial resources and an overwhelming response to this proposal, D.E.P. concentrated efforts on water bodies that are within priority areas for habit preservation/restoration or areas where water quality issues are a concern.***
- ***Heritage Landscape Inventory Program—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation***
 - Through the Historic Landscape Preservation Program, municipalities and not-for-profit organizations receive free technical assistance from DCR staff and professional consultants to identify and prioritize heritage landscapes. The deliverables of the program are a reconnaissance survey report, which summarizes the community's landscapes, documents public participation, and offers planning recommendations and specific strategies for the preservation of resources.
 - ***1-year project*** with public meetings, outreach and surveys.
 - ***Rationale of Funding Agency—Amherst has much more than communities that received this award: an active Historical Commission, completed Preservation Plan, and 880 structures inventoried to MHC standards.***

➤ ***FY10 General Grant—Massachusetts Environmental Trust***

- The Massachusetts Environmental Trust General Grants Program supports nonprofit organizations and municipalities in efforts to restore, protect, and improve water and water-related resources of the Commonwealth. The general grants program accepts proposals for programs and initiatives that address threats to the health of the state's water bodies and watersheds.
- **\$40,000** grant request for 2-year project to develop state-of-the-river reports for the Fort and Mill Rivers. With technical support from the Rushing Rivers Institute, the Conservation Department will help educate residents about the health of two major watersheds in town.
- ***Rationale of Funding Agency***—The amount of funding limited the number of awards to significantly less than in recent years. Correspondence with MET made clear the application and project were strong and relevant.

➤ ***FY2009 Survey and Planning Grant—Massachusetts Historical Commission***

- The National Park Service, through the Massachusetts Historical Commission, provides funding for a Survey and Planning grant. It is a 60-40 matching grant awarded to ten communities for preservation-related activities. These include completion of cultural resource inventories; nomination of significant properties to the National Register of Historic Places; completion of community-wide preservation plans; and other types of studies, reports, publications and projects that relate to the identification and protection of significant historic properties and sites.
- **\$12,000-15,000** funding request (\$20,000-\$25,000 total project cost) to hire professional consultants to:
 - ~ update the existing inventory of nearly 880 structures and verify accuracy and completeness of data,
 - ~ complete inventory forms for an additional 300 (242) structures identified in the 2005 Amherst Preservation Plan as integral to the historic character of town,
 - ~ complete inventories for cemeteries, outlying structures and supporting landscapes,
 - ~ take new digital photographs of all properties for display on the internet, and
 - ~ digitize material for development of a historic resource inventory website.
- ***Rationale of Funding Agency***—Amherst has inventoried more of its historic properties than have the surrounding communities in the Pioneer Valley, which makes us less competitive. Yet Amherst's historic resources are no less threatened. The grant application will be reworked and resubmitted for the fall 2009 round.

➤ ***Trees for Success Program—Arbor Day Foundation***

- The Arbor Day Foundation and Home Depot Foundation partner to provide communities and schools with up to 100 free 15-gallon trees to be planted on publicly owned property. The program intends to raise awareness about the

importance of community trees and help bolster local tree canopies in schools and communities across the country through the Trees for Success Program. Students, community organizations and business help plant the trees in a hands-on outdoor learning experience for the community, especially the students.

- ***Rationale of Funding Agency***—All of the communities receiving this award are inner city and highly urbanized, with a clearly visible need for increasing tree canopy. Amherst could benefit from new tree plantings, but has a significant amount of canopy cover when compared to such places as Detroit and Philadelphia.

Grants Under Consideration

Grants for economic development and brownfields assessment require specific investment from private stakeholders and often require significant preliminary work and negotiations that may take years to make the project eligible for funding.

➤ ***Economic Target Area (Recovery Zone)***

- As part of the Greater Franklin County Economic Target Area, although not in Franklin County, Amherst is eligible to apply for low-rate bond funding for economic development projects. The amount of funding available totals millions of dollars.

➤ ***Massachusetts Historical Commission***

1. Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund

- The Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) is a state-funded 50% reimbursable matching grant program established in 1984 to support the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites (cultural resources) listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Applicants must be a municipality or nonprofit organization.
- ***DUE: December-January***

2. FY2010 Survey and Planning Grant—Massachusetts Historical Commission

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- ~ complete inventories for cemeteries, outlying structures and supporting landscapes,
- ~ take new digital photographs of all properties for display on the internet, and
- ~ digitize material for development of a historic resource inventory website.

▪ ***DUE: December-January***

➤ ***Brownfields Assessment Grants—Environmental Protection Agency***

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields Program is designed to empower states, communities, and other stakeholders to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. EPA provides technical and financial assistance for brownfields activities through an approach based on four main goals: protecting human health and the environment, sustaining reuse, promoting partnerships, and strengthening the marketplace. Brownfields grants serve as the foundation of the Brownfields Program and support revitalization efforts by funding environmental assessment, cleanup, and job training activities.
- ***DUE: mid-November***

➤ ***Brownfields Fund Redevelopment—MassDevelopment***

- The Brownfields Redevelopment Fund, administered by MassDevelopment, targets the clean up and redevelopment of brownfields in Economically Distressed Areas (EDAs) in Massachusetts. Financing may be in the form of grants, recoverable grants, or flexible loans, depending on the economic needs of the project.
- The Planning Department is working with the Planning Board and Amherst Redevelopment Authority to generate a list of priority brownfields sites in Amherst.
- ***DUE: January-February***

➤ ***Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development***

1. Massachusetts Downtown Initiative

- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) offers a range of services and assistance to communities seeking help on how to revitalize their downtowns. The primary mission of the MDI is to make downtown revitalization an integral part of community development in cities and towns across the Commonwealth. MDI's guiding principles are that the most effective approach to downtown revitalization is a holistic one; that it addresses economic and community development needs; and that it

provides a framework of interrelated activities that promote positive change in a downtown to keep it healthy and prosperous.

- ***DUE: mid-November***

2. Community Development Action Grant

- The Community Development Action Grant (CDAG) Program provides funding for publicly owned or managed projects that have a significant impact on the overall economic condition of a city or town, including activities that will significantly improve the conditions of low and moderate income persons through: (a) the support of workforce housing needs across a range of incomes; (b) the generation and/or retention of long term employment; (c) the leveraging of significant private investment; and (d) the improvement of physical conditions.
- ***DUE: Rolling Admission, typically November-January***

➤ ***Public Works Economic Development (PWED) Program—Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation***

- The Public Works Economic Development (PWED) Program was created by the Legislature to assist municipalities in funding transportation infrastructure for the purpose of stimulating economic development.
- ***DUE: Twice per fiscal year, typically in Spring and Fall***

➤ ***Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation***

- In 1978, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts created CEDAC to serve as a vital resource for organizations engaged in community economic development. CEDAC is a public-private, community development finance institution that provides technical assistance, pre-development lending, and consulting services to non-profit organizations involved in housing development, workforce development, neighborhood economic development, and capital improvements to child care facilities.
- ***DUE: Rolling admission throughout the year***

➤ ***MassWildlife—Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game***

1. Landowner Incentive Program

- The MassWildlife Landowner Incentive Program is a partnership that provides private landowners interested in developing and maintaining wildlife habitat on their property with financial and technical assistance. State biologists are currently working with private landowners to enhance and protect important habitats across the Commonwealth.
- Municipalities have a role—the Town of Amherst would work with interested landowners to help facilitate the program.
- ***DUE: Typically due September-October***

2. Riverways Program Grants for River Restoration and Revitalization - Priority Projects

- Funds are intended to further the goals of the DFG by restoring the ecological integrity of rivers and streams throughout the Commonwealth

working in partnership with federal, state, and municipal governments, watershed associations and other organizations. Riverways supports sustainable river restoration projects that restore natural processes, remove ecosystem stressors, increase the resilience of the ecosystem; support riverine habitat, promote passage of fish and wildlife through dam and other barrier removal.

- Both the Mill River and Fort River watershed are in need of such help.
- ***DUE: Typically due September-October***

➤ ***Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grants—Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs***

- Municipalities and regional planning agencies may submit funding proposals of up to \$30,000 per participating community for the implementation of smart growth consistent land use practices. These grants focus on helping communities implement smart growth consistent environmental and planning measures from their Commonwealth Capital applications and Community Development Plans.
- ***DUE: April-May***

These projects and grants have been initiated by staff in Conservation and Development:

David Ziomek, Director of Conservation and Development
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Stephanie Ciccarello, Wetlands Administrator
Jeffrey Bagg, Senior Planner
Nathaniel Malloy, Associate Planner
Dave McKinnon, Assistant Land Manager

Additional support has been provided by:

Ron Bohonowicz, Director of Facilities
Guilford Mooring, Public Works Superintendent
Linda Chalfant, Director of Leisure Services
Roy Rosenblatt, Director of Community Services
Bob Pariseau, Director of Water Resources, Assistant Superintendent of Public Works
Alan Snow, Tree Warden
Jason Skeels, Town Engineer
Holly Bowser, Assistant to Comptroller
Paul Dethier, Civil Engineer
Mark Milville, Sports Director